



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

July 1973.

Dear Friend and Member,

The Annual Meeting of this Society will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, July 20th, 1973.

Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.

Business: Opening and Welcome.

Apologies.

Minutes of Previous Annual Meeting.

Annual Financial Report.

Lydham Hall Annual Report.

Report from President of Fund Raising Committee.

President's Annual Report.

Election of Officers for 1973 - 1974.

Patrons (4)

President.

Senior Vice President.

Vice Presidents (3)

Hon. Secretary.

Hon. Asst. Secretary.

Hon. Treasurer.

Hon. Auditors (2)

Committee of Management. (President, Secretary, Treasurer
and 7 Members).

Lydham Hall Committee.

Ladies Social Committee. It has been suggested that all Ladies
who are able - go on Roster?

also:-

Research Officer, Publicity Officer, Editor & Social Secretary.

Correspondence.

General Business.

At conclusion, Members will show Historical Slides.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Supper Roster: Captain, Mrs. Day, & Mesdames Greenlees, Johnson, Farrar,
Predy, Gillard.

Mr. D. Sinclair, President. 587.4555. Mrs. E. Wright, A/Secretary. 599.4884

Mr. A. Ellis, Research Officer. 587.1159. Mrs. E. Eardley, Editor & Social
Secretary. 59.8078.

"Pioneers of a Country, or of a Great Undertaking, are like the foundations of a
Great City, soon built over and forgotten."

John Dunmore Lang.

FILM EVENING.

On Saturday, September 8th, 1973, a Film Evening will be held in Miss Karen Wright's Home, in Botany Street, Carlton. Donation for Lydham Hall Fund. Details later.

OCTOBER LONG WEEKEND VISIT TO HISTORIC PORT MACQUARIE.

Leaving Rockdale Saturday, September 29th, 1973.

Spending Saturday & Sunday Nights at Port Macquarie.

Returning Monday October 1st, 1973. (Morning in Taree)

Phone Mrs. E. Wright, 599.4884, for further information.

Deposits Please - and you may make further payments if you wish.

MEMBERS SLIDE EVENING.

Following the Annual Meeting on July 20th, 1973, it has been suggested that Members bring along some of their Historical Slides; these will be much appreciated and enjoyed, and will round off the evening nicely. Will you co-operate please?

On Saturday, August 11th, 1973, a Bus will leave Rockdale Town Hall at 1 p.m. Sharp for Paddington Town Hall, where you will see an interesting display titled:-

"A Lady of Fashion" (Sponsored by the Paddington Historical Society)
An Exhibition of Women's Gowns from the 19th and early 20th Centuries, a group of "George 3rd Costumes", "Regency Dresses" from the 1830's will be displayed, amongst others.

Admission to the Exhibition will be \$1.00 plus \$1.00 for Bus - Total \$2.00.

If you are interested, and this should be really worthwhile, please ring Mrs. Eardley, 59.8078, as early as possible.

We are sorry to learn that Mr. Piper has suffered a heart attack, and is at present in St. George Hospital. The President and Members wish you a speedy recovery, Mr. Piper, and hope to see you out and about again very soon.

Items donated to "Lydham Hall" by Mr. & Mrs. F. Hayman:

Man's "Straw Boater" hat, marked inside Crown: "Manufactured for C. H. Smith & Son, Sydney. 1852". Does anyone remember this Firm???

Old Glass Bottle and Stopper.

Sandstock brick, and two Horseshoes, dug up on land at No. 2 Hillpine Avenue, adjacent to the original Fitzgerald Family home, 75-77 Rocky Point Road, Kogarah.

Pince-nez Spectacles in Case: 50 years old.

Cedar Newell for Staircase, and replacement piece for bedroom doorjamb, made by Mr. Hayman from piece of Cedar from Fitzgerald Home.

Miss Thomas,

Forest Road, Floral " Lip " Teapot, over 50 years old.

Bexley.

THE NAPOLEON STREET TRAM STOP. SANS SOUCI. N. S. W.

.... Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

It is of interest to recall the period, some fifty years ago or more, when the fascinating steam tram wended its noisy way from Kogarah to Sans Souci and Sandringham, and to remember the sylvan splendour and lovely homes associated with Russell Avenue at Dolls Point. Our minds dwell on the somewhat lonely waiting shed serving the then few inhabitants grouped around the southern end of Napoleon Street at Sans Souci, where the well known Douglas family of fisherfolk resided nearby.

The waiting-shed, erected between the tramway line and the sandy bank bordering the extensive esturial mud-flats was open on its western side and boarded up on its eastern side to give protection from the howling southeasterlies and "southerly-busters" which occasionally swept in from the wide expanse of Botany Bay and Woollooware Bay.

Rocky Point marked the southern-most extent of Douglas Flats, and as its name expresses, was a rocky point with massive vertical sided rocks of sandstone ranging along the shoreside of a narrow level platform, exposed at low tide, but submerged at high tide. When the tide was out the platform was a mass of shallow rock pools, swarming with small marine life, from tiny gudgeon-like fish, periwinkles, small crabs of fearsome aspect who scuttled sideways when disturbed, limpets, anemones of various kinds, to a multitude of little coloured spiral shaped shells suitable to be pierced and strung together for beads. These tidal pools were a wonderland to the budding naturalist. Sad to relate the periwinkles and other varieties of shell-fish are no more, having been assiduously collected by the Southern European community in our midst who hunger for these salty but tasty morsels.

Surrounded by a dense thicket of stunted olive-trees, intermixed with a rank spiky growth of aloes, was a big muzzle-loading cannon, supported on a heavy timber framework carried in four solid wooden wheels. With the installation of this obsolete weapon, presumably during the eighteen-nineties, Rocky Point (once known as Charlotte Point) became known as Gun Point to the local residents and weekend visitors. This cannon, according to information supplied by the late Miss Frater, originally came from the old British man-of-war named 'H. M. S. WOLVERINE'. Described as a "Steam Corvette" this picturesque ship was built at Woolwich Docks in England during the year 1859. With its fitment of twenty-two guns it was a warship to be reckoned with and it became the flagship of a naval squadron.

On January 16th, 1882, Commodore Wilson, on behalf of the British Government, handed over the vessel to the care of the New South Wales Government for use as a training ship for the New South Wales Volunteer Naval Brigade. Sir Henry Parkes officially received the gift, saying at the ceremony, amongst other things:- "I think you will agree with us that our Naval Brigade men will soon be able to handle the "WOLVERINE" without discredit to the naval fame of the Empire". A long period devoted to holiday and Saturday afternoon drill sessions followed, during the course of which guns and appurtenances generally saw little if any maintenance, and the condition of the old ship deteriorated to such an extent that in 1889 it was condemned as being unseaworthy. Stripped of its naval gear it was sold for further

service as a collier, taking a cargo of coal across to New Zealand, where the "WOLVERINE" put into one of the ports and there ended her career as far as the high-seas were concerned.

The gun at Sans Souci was of great interest to children on the occasion of picnics to the area and its bore, pointing towards Taren Point on the opposite shore of Georges River, was always chock full of broken bottles and similar bric-a-brac. Unfortunately the old gun, in a decrepit condition, was removed when the access roadway leading to the new Captain Cook Bridge was constructed. It is now sited close to the nearby premises of the local sailing club.

In the days when the Sans Souci area was so well served by its oft lamented steam tram we can remember the shrill whistling at the Sans Souci stop prior to the tram-motor crossing Rocky Point Road at the approach to the Taren Point vehicular ferry. The tram then coasted ever so quietly down the grass-grown length of Fraters Avenue to the next stop, known as Rocky Point, where a large waiting shed was placed on the southern side of the rails adjacent to the intersection of Riverside Drive. This shed had an exceptionally long hard wooden seat enclosed at the back and with short width panelling at the ends. The roof extended northwards and was capable of sheltering from the rain, at least a great number of picnic parties who flocked to the neighbouring sandy beach and cockle-infested flats at weekends and holidays. The stop was poorly patronised at other times, apart from loving couples enjoying the scenic effects of the moonlight over Botany Bay. The tram shed has long disappeared but a similar building is located at the intersection of Clareville Avenue and Russell Avenue where it is still appreciated by passengers waiting for motor bus transport.

Leaving the Rocky Point tram stop the steam motor gave a few sonorous puffs to get the cars moving and then ambled along quietly on its own metalled right-of-way laid along the verge of the waterfront, the track passing over a long section of "Kitchen Middens", where cockle-shells and whelk-shells, and large mud-oyster shells, gave mute evidence of countless years of feasting by the one time aboriginal inhabitants. The next tram stop was at the intersection of Napoleon Street where another, but much shorter, waiting shed had been erected. The enclosed back, perched on concrete blocks raising above the sandy beach, was greatly appreciated by the local and oft wind-blown residents. This shed has also disappeared but its site today is marked by the concrete foundation which was left in-situ.

Then came the facing entrance point of the steam motor depot, where a short gaunt-looking galvanised iron structure housed the engines in their more leisurely moments. Two short tracks entered the building whilst a large stack of coal and an elevated water tank gave an indication of the feeding and drinking habits of the little engines. It is believed that the coal heap was also of great interest to the neighbouring fisher-folk in the night time when domestic supplies of fuel were somewhat low.

Nearby and immediately north of the tram depot there was a short jetty projecting out into deep water where, according to ancient report, steam colliers from the South Coast mines, brought consignments of coal destined for the tramway. The jetty was also a port of call for the "S.S. ERINA" and

"S.S. ECLIPSE" when these small steamboats plied at weekends between Sans Souci and Kurnell. Skirting the western side of the tram depot, and its once so lonely and seldom operated tramway semaphore signal, was a large single storied cottage set amidst a wealth of shrubbery and fronted by the murky waters of the semi-tidal creek known as the SERPENTINE, of which more anon.

Adjacent to and on the northern side of this cottage was an enclosed area given over, in the early part of the present century, to the hellish business, one cannot call it a sport, of live pigeon shooting. The birds were bred in a large wire enclosure at the rear of the premises, and were also purchased by the proprietors from children in urgent need of a few small coins to spend. The "Guns", mostly on Saturday afternoons, were lined up with their backs to the tramway, whilst the pigeons were individually placed in small specially designed traps some little distance away, said traps being opened to release the birds marked for destruction by means of a wire or a string device. The birds had no chance of escaping their fate and loud cheers were given as they were shot to pieces. It was a blood sport at its worst. Fortunately "clay" pigeons were later introduced, a circumstance which afforded the same degree of shooting prowess, but evidently did not satisfy the blood-lust inherent in the misguided individuals concerned, as the sport was shortly afterwards discontinued.

North of the tramway depot the line entered Clareville Avenue where a stop was made at a loop siding immediately opposite the pleasure grounds associated with the tree-girt Prince of Wales Hotel, and its neighbouring Selmon's boatshed and tearooms at Stripper's Point, or should we say Sandringham. The tram then proceeded onwards around the loop to gain the terminal at the Kogarah Railway Station.

North-eastwards from the sandstone outcrop at Rocky Point the estuarial shore of Georges River is marked by extensive seaweed covered tidal flats, known locally as Douglas Flats, so called after the professional fishing Douglas clan who resided enmasse in a pretty little cottage facing Riverside Drive. At low tide these windswept flats are the haunt of countless Silver Gulls and prospecting black and white ibis, who probe the mud with their curved bills for edible tid-bits. Pelicans have been sighted and, on their migratory flights, the Bar-tailed Godwits and the Sand-pipers make the saltings a port of call. Dotterels, egrets, herons, comorants, and terns have also been noted frequenting the area, all busily feeding, following closely the ebbing waters of the tide. The migrant birds do not stay for any length of time, perhaps a few hours, and then away to their northern or their southern flight destinations.

Prior to and during the nineteen-twenties the Douglas Flats, at low tide, were noted for their battalions of small blue and white coloured "Soldier" crabs. These crustaceans marched and counter-marched in vast armies over the sands, generally avoiding the weedy and more muddy sections. It was fascinating to watch the whole assembly dig itself in and disappear from view when disturbed in any way. Strangely enough in recent years these quaint little creatures have disappeared from this waterfront. The mud flats were of interest to prospective line and rod fishermen who came, armed with spades,

to dig out long sea-worms, and also tread the water margins for pippies, both of which afforded excellent fish elks whose privacy was disturbed on occasions by the questing bare feet of boys and men who found them, after being boiled, a great if somewhat indigestible delicacy. The whelks in particular, had to be eaten with the aid of a ladies steel hat-pin in order to remove the edible part from its spiral shaped shell.

One recalls with pleasure the spectacle of his aged grandfather, on the maternal side, journeying to the Douglas Flats, per medium of the steam tram, armed with a bucket and an iron spade, to bring home a collection of cockles, mussels, and whelks. The old gentleman had a very bushy black beard and always wore a black bowler hat. Paddling about in the mud, treading with his feet to locate the buried shell-fish, his legs became covered with rich black ooze of an extremely clinging nature. Getting rid of this mud before he unrolled his trousers was somewhat of a problem but the subsequent feed was always worth the effort.

The Sans Souci isthmus, before its development, was a land of dense forest surrounding a tract of marshland which was noted for its attractive covering of casuarina trees and golden flowered wattle, the latter providing a harvest of rich tanning bark, the stripping of which for the tanneries of Sydneytown, many years ago, was a source of income to some of the then few local residents, hence the name of Stripper's Point being conferred on what is now known as Sandringham. This latter name was introduced by "Granddad" (William Edward) Rust, the original licensee of the Prince of Wales Hotel, in nostalgic memory of his birthplace in England.

The huge forest trees were gradually felled to provide firewood billets, of which many were forwarded to the locomotive running shed at Eveleigh, the fuel being loaded into the former "H" class side-tipping bogie wagons, six of which had been relegated for this particular traffic and taken, as required, over the Sans Souci tramway for their loading. The late Mr. Selmon stated that on one occasion the tram was proceeding along Rocky Point Road towards Kogarah, with a single carriage, dummy truck, and an "H" truck of firewood trailing behind. By some unexplained means the body of the latter vehicle tipped sideways and deposited its load along the length of the roadway before the mishap was noted. A greatly annoyed tram crew had the arduous job of gathering the billets and loading them on to the wagon, taking particular care this time that the tipping mechanism was made securely fast.

With the destruction of the primeval gum tree forest the terrain became covered with a stunted secondary growth, including five-corner bushes, "Old Man's Beard", "Soldier's Buttons", and odd bushes of Dillwynia, whilst the marshlands supported a wilderness of coarse leaved ferns and tea-tree, of short height, the white honey-scented flowers of which gave extreme pleasure to the bees in the early days of Spring.

Perhaps the principal natural feature of old-time Sandringham was the meandering shallow stream, known appropriately as the SERPENTINE, which drained the flat hinterland before it entered what is now known as Scott Park. Here it doubled-backed on its course in a northerly direction where its bed may still be traced. Then came a bend to the east where the water entered

the pleasure ground attached to the Prince of Wales Hotel, before a southerly course came into being. Here a small tree-covered island, flanked with banks of arum lilies, was connected to the neighbouring dance hall by a short foot-bridge, designed for occupancy by romantic couples, which is just as it should be... The wriggly southern course of the stream was stopped by the tramway embankment, but continued as a pool on the western side of this obstruction, the water being discoloured and murky, and also brackish, the home of entrapped mullet up to a foot or so in length.

Formerly, before the construction of the tramway, the course of the stream continued southwards along what is now Riverside Drive before turning sharply south-eastwards to flow over Douglas Flats and thus join Georges River. With the coming of the tramway it was decided to use the water of the SERPENTINE to supply the needs of the steam locomotives, as there was no supply of this essential commodity at the Kogarah terminal of the line. To this end a by-pass was constructed, lined with timber slabs, which eliminated the wanderings and loops of the waterway and provided a suitable dam free from the all pervading sand. The presence of this supply of fresh water was responsible for the locomotive shed being constructed at Sandringham.

Today the old course of the Serpentine has been covered with soil and has thus disappeared from view beneath a group of multi-storied flats. Most of the low-lying hinterland is now covered with cottages, and often with flood-waters during heavy storms, much to the mortification of the residents and the problems of drainage associated with the lack of run-off facilities. The tramway has long departed and the sealed Riverside Drive has taken its place along the foreshore. There are several isolated but beautiful specimens of Norfolk Island Pine trees growing along the banked section bordering the Douglas Flats. It is fortunate that the latter weed-covered and bird-haunted area still supplies nutrient to the countless finny denizens of the deep which also haunt this interesting region, when the tides are high, and the wind blows from the right quarter, providing it is not too turbulent in its hurry.

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CORRIGENDUM

"A History of Carlton", Part 2, Page 219. First line of third paragraph. For "\$1,020,000" read "£1,020,000"

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OUR JOURNEY TO PADDINGTON.

The expedition by parlour coach of many members and friends of the St. George Historical Society to view the inner environs of historic Paddington took place on Saturday, June 16th, 1973. An opportunity was afforded to inspect the charms of the terraced two-storied houses, nowadays referred to as "Town-houses", which, in countless groups spread over the northern slopes of Paddington Hill in particular. The region generally possesses the old-world atmosphere of London's "East-end", and also of certain "arrondissements" of our beloved Paris. Within recent years much energy and paint, together with the stripping of walls to bring to light the glories of sand-stock brickwork, has lifted the area away from its former slum aspect of "darkstone" and "lightstone" damp-protective colouring, into a scene of sheer architectural delight to those whose several senses are attuned to just these things. The narrow winding streets, the numerous cul-de-sacs, and even the back footways, once necessary to serve the backyard toilet of each and every residence, are all worthy of exploration.

To the author's wayward mind the tiny circumscribed section, known as Paddington Village, where most of the cottages date back to the eighteenth-forties, is the real delight of "Paddo". Here the artisans engaged in the construction of the nearby Victoria Barracks built their tiny residences, all cheek by jowl, and of wondrous design. The place is a real survival of by-gone years and its proper detailed exploration can only be accomplished on foot and is best approached from Glenmore Road via Gipps Street, Prospect Street, and Spring Street, the latter being our centre of attraction.

There is so much to see in Paddington, the details of construction are without end, from "Sydney Lace" ornamenting the balconies, doors and their knockers, spindly iron spearhead fences and gates, the round-headed windows, the moulded chimney-pots arranged in clusters, and the tiny front gardens where an occasional small tree overshadows the footpath. The household cats are friendly but the speeding motorists are not, and are to be avoided at all costs.

Should any of our architecture-minded members be interested in a ramble on foot through the more fascinating sections of Paddington, travelling to and from by Public Transport, they are welcome to ring 59.8078 and we feel sure that such a venture can be arranged, where freedom to wander at will be our main consideration.

For those desirous of gaining more intimate knowledge of the early history of Paddington we recommend the following books, which can usually be obtained at Messrs. Angus & Robertson, Pitt Street, Sydney. They comprise:- "A Place Called Paddington", by Robert Hillier. "Paddington Sketchbook", Drawings by Unk White and the text by Patricia Thompson. "The Story of Paddington", by Patricia Thompson.

Gifford & Eileen Eardley.